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# *Zoroastrian motifs in non-Zoroastrian traditions*<sup>1</sup>

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We owe to Zoroaster one of the oldest religions of mankind. We cannot call Zoroaster's doctrine a world religion in the strict sense, for it did not spread far beyond the limits of the Iranian world, nor did its followers spread over the world as the Parsis do now and the Manichaeans once did. But many ideas first expressed by Zoroaster or his followers, such as the all-encompassing dualism of good and evil, light and darkness, or the resurrection of the dead in the flesh, or the responsibility of mankind for the fate of this world and the world beyond, have influenced, from the middle of the first millennium BCE on, the spirituality of the near eastern peoples and so also the religions of Judaism, and by way of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, too. This is sufficient to grant the religion of Zoroaster a most important position in the history of human religiosity.

But it is not these fundamental ideas of religious doctrines which I want to make my subject here. Instead I want to substantiate the fact of Zoroastrian influence on other religions or at least of a Zoroastrian anticipation of certain religious ideas in a common ambiance by adducing three small but precise and hardly contestable pieces of evidence. I shall discuss firstly the Jewish demon Asmodaios, secondly the Manichaean Virgin of Good Deeds, and thirdly how king Kā'ūs escaped from the peril of death according to an adventurous story in Ferdousi's *Šāhnāme*.

## **Asmodaios**

The demon Asmodaios (variant spelling: Asmódaus) makes his first appearance in one of the loveliest legends of the Old Testament as told in the *Book of Tōbit*. The story was probably composed in the first half of the second century BCE, possibly around 200 BCE<sup>2</sup> Since it was composed in the Hellenistic period it was written in Greek, but the question whether there was an Aramaic or even Hebrew Urtext from which the Greek text was translated or at least inspired has long been disputed. It is only after the discovery of a substantial part of the work in fragments of one Hebrew and four Aramaic manuscripts among the Qumran-texts that this question could be solved: all the versions in other languages go back to a Hebrew<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Professor Mary Boyce memorial lecture, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, May 2007.

<sup>2</sup>Löhr 1900, p. 136; Dommershausen 1969, col. 1761.

<sup>3</sup>Beyer 2004, p. 173.

or an Aramaic source text.<sup>4</sup> Only the Greek text has completely survived. As a Greek text it never gained the status of a canonical scripture but was regarded as apocryphal.

The *Book of Tōbit* tells the story of Tōbias, the son of the well-to-do and charitable Jewish tradesman Tōbit. He stemmed from a highly respected exiled family in Niniveh. It happened that Tōbit, the father, suffered blows of hardship. He incurred the disfavour of the Assyrian king. After his rehabilitation he lost his eye-sight as a consequence of an accident. In this situation he remembers that long ago he had deposited the amount of ten talents of silver with a partner in Rages, ie. the ancient Iranian town of Rey near today's Teheran. He commissions Tōbias, his only son, to go to Rages and reclaim the deposit. Tōbias, however, still an inexperienced adolescent, is less qualified than willing to fulfil his father's wish. Fortunately he becomes acquainted with a trustworthy young man who assures him that he is familiar with the route and even with Tōbias' relatives in Ecbatana (the Hamadan of our days), and that he is ready to accompany Tōbias on his way. What nobody knows is that the young man who calls himself Azaria, the son of Ananias, is none else than God's archangel of healing, Rafaël, in human shape.

Tōbias and his friend go east. When they cross the Tigris river Tōbias catches a big fish. Rafaël advises his friend to keep the heart, the liver and the gall-bladder of the fish as a medical and a magical remedy. When they reach Ecbatana on their way to Rages they stay with Ragouël, a cousin of Tōbit. His only daughter Sara is Tōbias's closest relative, and so Tobias is, more than any other man, entitled to take her as his wife. Thanks to Rafaël's intercession the marriage takes place, but now it becomes apparent that Sara has long since been the victim of the jealousy of the cruel demon Asmodaios who frustrates her father's efforts to give her in marriage. Seven bridegrooms have already been killed by Asmodaios in the bridal chamber. Will Tōbias be the eighth? Again Rafaël knows what to do. On his advice Tōbias burns the heart and the liver of the fish in the bridal chamber on the wedding night. Their smell drives away the demon who flees to upper Egypt where he is tied up forever by Rafaël.

What follows is a totally happy ending. Rafaël gets the deposit on behalf of Tōbias, Tōbias, his wife and Rafaël return to Niniveh, Tōbit's eye disease is cured with the gall of the fish. In the end, the archangel Rafaël discloses his true identity and disappears. Tōbias however, at the advice of his father, leaves Niniveh, goes to Iran and lives for the rest of his life in Ecbatana.

I mention briefly that the demon Asmodaios became a prominent figure in the demonology of the *Talmud* where his name is *Ašmedai*,<sup>5</sup> spelled 'šmd'y and 'šmdyy.<sup>6</sup> Beside other activities, Ašmedai becomes Solomon's unwilling helper in building the temple in Jerusalem. As a Jewish demon he also entered into Christian mythology as *Asmedai*. He is mentioned e.g. in the *Malleus maleficarum* (The witches' hammer) of 1486, and a sculpture of his ugliness can be seen in the church of Rennes-le-Château. He became a popular figure

<sup>4</sup>Vermes 1997, p. 558.

<sup>5</sup>Lurker 1989, pp. 46–47.

<sup>6</sup>Levy I, 1963, p. 179.

in European literature as the dramatis persona of *Le diable boiteux* (The limping devil) by Alain René Lesage (published in 1707).<sup>7</sup>

Ever since Theodor Benfey,<sup>8</sup> scholars have regarded *Asmodaios*/*Ašmedai* as a demon of Iranian, Zoroastrian origin.<sup>9</sup> The supposed Iranian model first appears in the *Avesta*. His Avestan name was *Aēšma-* or, in the nominative, *Aēšmō*. *Asmodaios* might then be derived from an Avestan form *Aēšmō daēuuō*. Even if that construction is not attested in the *Avesta*, it is a natural combination of words, and this is actually attested in its Middle Persian form *Xēšm dēw*.<sup>10</sup> But problems remain. They concern both the name and the characteristic activities of the demon.

As for his Greek name, the rendering of the Iranian *š* by the Greek Sigma and the non-rendering of the final *v/w* need no comment. But why is the initial *ai* of *Aēšmō* replaced by an *a*-sound (*a* or *ā*)? For Isidor Scheftelowitz this was an argument against the Iranian origin of the name. “\**aišmō daiwō* hätte \**γšmdyūw* werden müssen”, he said.<sup>11</sup> Scheftelowitz was not the only one to doubt or reject the Iranian origin of the word. The objections are based on the assumption that the Avestan form was directly borrowed by the Jews. But it is no less possible that the name was taken over in one of its Middle Iranian forms. A Parthian and a Middle Persian form of the name are attested in unequivocal spellings in Manichaean orthography as Middle Persian *xyšm* and *xyγšm* and Parthian *‘šmg*.<sup>12</sup> The Middle Persian spelling was certainly pronounced *xēšm* which became *xešm* and even *xašm* in New Persian.<sup>13</sup> The Parthian spelling stands for *išmag* or *ešmag*, with a short initial vowel, since a plene writing \**‘γšmg* is not attested. So the Avestan *ai* became a short front vowel in Parthian at least and, if not earlier, in New Persian too. If we may assume that the demon’s name found its way into the Aramaic language of the Jews of the second century BCE with a short initial vowel of a monosyllabic word \**išm*, then it seems possible that its vowel was remodelled according to the so-called Philippi’s law, which says: “An *i* in a closed, stressed syllable in the interior of a word . . . becomes *a* in Hebrew and Aramaic”.<sup>14</sup> On these conditions a Middle Iranian (perhaps a Parthian) \**išm(ə)dēw* could well have been rendered in Aramaic as \**ašm(ə)dēw* which became *Asmodaios* in Greek spelling.

Scholars who dispute the Iranian origin of the demon’s name *Asmodaios*/*Ašmedai* often derive this word from Hebrew *šmd* “to destroy” (in the *Hif’il*)<sup>15</sup> which means, however, to disregard the undisputable Iranian background of the Tōbit-story where *Asmodaios* appears for the first time.

I think that the Greek form of the name was not immediately derived from the Iranian word but that it goes back to the Aramaic *Ašmedai* or *Ašmādāi*, and that the Iranian word was remodelled in this form. The reason for reshaping the Iranian name might have been

<sup>7</sup>Cf. information given in <http://www.dergral.de/mythen/asmodeus.htm>; <http://de.geocities.com/anubiscly/Rennes.htm>; [http://www.heresie.com/rennes\\_le\\_chateau.htm](http://www.heresie.com/rennes_le_chateau.htm).

<sup>8</sup>Contra: Löhr 1989, p. 136, pro: Dommershausen 1969, col. 1759.

<sup>9</sup>Benfey and Stern 1836, p. 201.

<sup>10</sup>*Smaller Bundahišn*, ed. Justi 1868, p. 67, 6; *Greater Bundahišn*, ed. Anklesaria 1908, p. 183, 12; tr. Anklesaria 1956, p. 237; *Dēnkard* VIII, chap. 5, ed. Madan 1911, p. 687. 23.

<sup>11</sup>Scheftelowitz 1920, p. 61.

<sup>12</sup>Durkin-Meisterernst 2004, pp. 93, 371.

<sup>13</sup>On this development cf. Hübschmann 1895, pp. 141–142.

<sup>14</sup>Brockelmann 1908, pp. 59–60.

<sup>15</sup>Eg. Gutmann, Scholem 1929, col. 498–502.

that the Jews indeed understood the consonantal structure of the word  $\text{šmd}^{\gamma}$  in the sense of their own verb *šmd* “to destroy”<sup>16</sup> from which a genuine Jewish demon’s name *šmdwn* (*Šemadon*) had already been derived.<sup>17</sup> This assumption might be proved if the proper name *Ašmedai* could be attested in the still existing fragments of the Hebrew and the Aramaic versions of the *Book of Tōbit*. But it is not. Wherever the demon is mentioned there he is just called *šedā* “demon”.<sup>18</sup>

The other observation which makes the Iranian origin of the demon *Asmodaios* problematic is the seemingly different nature and activity of the Iranian and the Jewish demons. I can best put it in E. Stave’s words (given here in my English translation):

Aeshma is the adversary of Sraosha and the creator of wrath and revengefulness in the hearts of man, and all evil that happens in the world comes about through his aid. Asmodäus, however, is, like the Ashmedai in the Talmud, a demon particularly characterised by his lewdness, which is not attested for Aeshma and hardly existed in him, and even less so since this was in the Avesta the role of another demon, Azi.<sup>19</sup>

More scholars could be named, for example L.H. Gray.<sup>20</sup> Sh. Pines, on the other hand, pointed out that the idea of demonised wrath existed both in Zoroastrianism and in Judaism, but he also expressed his doubts about a total dependence of this idea in Judaism and Christianity on Iranian influence.<sup>21</sup>

It is true that *Aēšma* means wrath, and even its New Persian descendant *xešm* or *xašm* has the same meaning, while the Jewish *Asmodaios* is primarily a ‘lustful, desirous’ demon who then acquired many other evil qualities to which ‘wrath’ and ‘fury’ do not belong. But it should not be overlooked that the wrath of the Zoroastrian demon is focused on one of the greatest human merits in Zoroastrian view, the consummation of the highly praised next-of-kin marriage (*xwēdōdah*). This follows from a famous passage in the *Rivāyats Accompanying the Dādestān ī dēnīg*. I quote the text in the translation of A.V. Williams with minor deviations:

And (the demon) Wrath growls: ‘For the material world (there are) three essential things which are at work in the material world.’ And Ahriman (growls): ‘What (are) those three things?’ Wrath growls: ‘*mēzd* [an offering ceremony] and *gāhāmbār* [the seasons’ festivals] and *xwēdōdah*.’ Ahriman growls: ‘If you desire, you may know the (counter)-remedy of two of these things, attend the *mēzd* (service) yourself and sit in their hearts so that they chatter: the *yazad* will go from their midst. Attend the *gāhāmbār*, so that they steal things from one another: when they have stolen something from one another, the *gāhāmbār* is broken. Leave *xwēdōdah*, since even I do not know the remedy to (give) you (for that) except for their (compliance), for when they copulate four times man and wife will never depart from the (bond of) kinship of Ohrmazd. But again progeny must be given to them. (Only) as a result of less progeny (in) the world will

<sup>16</sup>In this I follow Ryan 1967, p. 958.

<sup>17</sup>Levy 1963, p. 572.

<sup>18</sup>Vermes 1997, pp. 558–565; Beyer 2004, pp. 175–176, 177–181.

<sup>19</sup>Stave 1898, p. 264.

<sup>20</sup>Gray [1930], p. 186.

<sup>21</sup>Pines 1982, pp. 76–82.

they then have no wish to believe in him [ie. Ohrmazd], otherwise it will not be possible to do anything against man and wife'.<sup>22</sup>

A very similar appreciation of next-of-kin marriage is given in *The Supplementary Texts to the Šāyast nē-šāyast*.<sup>23</sup> It demonstrates at the same time that the Zoroastrian *Aēšma* was a fierce enemy of the meritorious consummation of the cohabitation of man and wife, not because of covetousness or jealousy but because human cohabitation will produce progeny, it will keep humankind prosperous and enduring and make them continuous supporters of Ohrmazd in his battle against Ahriman. The *xwēdōdah*, our text says, cannot be ruined by *Aēšma*, but one may assume that he is more efficient in ruining cohabitations of the ordinary kind. It is consistent with *Aēšma*'s animosity against human cohabitation that he is mainly active at night.<sup>24</sup> His enemy is *Sraoša*, the protector of creation during the night. Of him the *Avesta* says:

We worship Sraoša . . . who fashions a strong house for the pious man and woman, after the setting of the sun, who, with a shattering weapon, inflicts a bloodless wound on Aēšma and, then again, striking his evil head, crushes him, as a stronger man (crushes) a weaker.<sup>25</sup>

Yet the damage done by the demons at night must not be underestimated. One of *The Rivāyats accompanying the Dādistān ī dēnīg* gives this advice:

This also (is) manifest in the Avesta, that a man should approach his wife in the light of the sun or a (domestic) fire, for if he does so the demons can do less damage to him: the child which is born (of such a union) will be more righteous and more victorious.<sup>26</sup>

Even if *Aēšma* is not mentioned in this text by name, we can be sure that he is one of the demons who are trying to ruin the nocturnal marital harmony. Both the similarity of the names *Aēšmō daēuuō* and *Asmodaios* and the role they play as enemies of marital union lead me to conclude that the assumption of an Iranian origin of the Jewish demon *Asmodaios* is correct and that it can be vindicated by the actual results of Iranian studies.

It has also been noted that the demon *Asmodaios* is not the only Iranian element in the *Book of Tōbit*. Tōbias and Rafaēl are accompanied during their journey by a dog. Dogs were held in high esteem by the Zoroastrian believers, and a "dog with four eyes" played an important role in the funeral ceremony. But elsewhere the dog is a despised creature in the Near East, by both Jews and Muslims. It is certainly with respect to Iranian customs that the author of the *Book of Tōbit* took the trouble to mention a dog as a fellow-traveller of the heroes of his story.

I cannot finish this section without referring to a modern adaptation of the Tōbit story Sally Vickers' novel *Miss Garnet's Angel* (London, 2000). It retells in a poetic manner the old story of Tōbias and interweaves it with a contemporary story which turns out to be an up-to-date parallel of the Tōbit story and in which the modern misuse of psychoanalysis is what *Asmodaios* was in the Jewish legend. The main part of the novel is set in Venice in

<sup>22</sup>Williams 1990, I, pp. 198–201 (text); II, pp. 93–94 (translation).

<sup>23</sup>Kotwal 1969, chap. XVIII, pp. 76–77.

<sup>24</sup>Kotwal 1969, chap. XIII, 43, pp. 52–53.

<sup>25</sup>*Yasna* 57, 9–10, ed. Ph. Kreyenbroek 1985, pp. 40–41.

<sup>26</sup>Williams 1990, I, pp. 142–143; II, pp. 61–62.

the little church San Raffaele. When I visited Venice in 2005 I did not fail to go to see San Raffaele. Above the main gate of the church the figures of Rafaël, Tōbias and the dog can be seen. Episodes of the Tōbit story are depicted at the organ gallery.

### The Virgin of Good Deeds

My second example, the Virgin of Good Deeds, is a topic of Manichaean mythology. Manichaeism, a dead world religion, was founded by Mani in the third century CE in Mesopotamia. A characteristic detail of Mani's individual eschatology is the definition of human deeds as imperishable spiritual entities which accompany the soul of a deceased person to the place of his or her ultimate destiny. The 90th Coptic *Kephalaion* puts it this way: "Every person shall follow after hi[s] de[e]ds, whether to life or indeed to death".<sup>27</sup>

It is important for my argument that the good deeds of man could appear as a beautiful virgin. That is so in a Sogdian tale edited by W.B. Henning and entitled by him "The Daēnā".<sup>28</sup> In this tale the soul of a deceased righteous man meets a beautiful young girl who, the text says, is "his own action" (*xw xypδ ʿkrtyh*).

In a characteristic syncretistic version of the Manichaean after-death legend as reported in an-Nadīm's *Fihrist al-ʿulūm*, the role of the psychopomp is played by a god appearing as the "leading sage" (*al-ḥakīm al-hādī*), followed by three other divine beings and with them "the Virgin who looks like the soul of that righteous man" (*al-bikr šabihata bi-nasama dālika š-šādīq*).<sup>29</sup>

The leading sage is certainly a redeeming deity of the Third Evocation, possibly the so-called *Light Form* (*Lichtgestalt*), an emanation of the Light Nous, of whom the *Kephalaia* know that she reveals herself (!) to everybody who leaves his mortal body.<sup>30</sup> François de Blois, however, reminds me that both the Arabic text of the *Fihrist* and an Old Turkish parallel text rather advocate the identification of the "leading sage" with the Light Nous himself.<sup>31</sup> Anyway, two beneficent powers collaborate, as it were, to redeem the redeemable soul of a deceased person, the redeeming gods of the Third Evocation and the meritorious deeds which the human being accomplishes himself.

In yet another version of the tale, attested in the Coptic *Book of Psalms*, the Virgin has regained the leading role. The text says:

[Let] me be worthy also to see thy Maiden for whose sake I have toiled, who brings all the gifts of the faithful (...), and her three angels that are with her.<sup>32</sup>

There is also a Virgin of Good Deeds in Zoroastrian mythology, called *daēnā* which usually means religion. Her description is given in full length in the Avestan *Haḍōxt nask* and mentioned in the *Vidēvdād*. Later, the Avestan legend was retold in many Middle Persian texts.<sup>33</sup> They completely identify the Virgin with the human deeds. In the *Avesta* it was good deeds that adorned and embellished the Virgin. In the Middle Persian texts the Virgin

<sup>27</sup> *Kephalaia* 1940, p. 224; tr. Gardner 1995, p. 232.

<sup>28</sup> Henning 1945, pp. 476–477; Henning, 1977, pp. 180–181.

<sup>29</sup> Flügel 1862; 1969, pp. 70, 100.

<sup>30</sup> *Kephalaia* 1940, p. 36. pp. 12–21; tr. Gardner 1995, p. 40.

<sup>31</sup> de Blois 2006, p. 40.

<sup>32</sup> *Psalm-Book* 938, p. 66. pp. 22–24.

<sup>33</sup> Sundermann 1992, pp. 163–165.

is herself the good or bad deeds of man. I quote here the version of the *Mēnōg ī xrad*, a late Sasanian work, in Robert Charles Zaehner's translation.<sup>34</sup> After the soul of the deceased person has passed the Činvat bridge, the encounter with the Virgin takes place. The text says:

And his own good deeds come to meet him in the form of a young girl, more beautiful and fair than any girl on earth. And the soul of the saved says: "Who art thou, for I have never seen a young girl on earth more beautiful or fair than thee." In answer the form of the young girl replies: "I am no girl but thy own good deeds (*hēm nē kanīg bē kunišn ī nēk ī tō*), O young man whose thoughts and words, deeds and religion (*dēn*) were good: . . . and thou didst amass thy wealth in righteousness. . . . I am thy good thoughts, good words, and good deeds which thou didst think and say and do. For though I was venerable (at first), thou hast made me yet more venerable, and though I was honourable (at first) thou hast made me yet more honourable, and though I was endowed with dignity (*xwarrōmand*) (at first), thou hast conferred on me yet greater dignity.

The earliest testimonies, those of the *Avesta*, attest to the existence of the Zoroastrian legend long before Mani's lifetime. So the historical preconditions are given for an adoption of the story by the Manichaeans from the Zoroastrian side. That this was possible in the third century CE is confirmed by the fact that the Zoroastrian priest Kerdīr who was active in Mani's time described in his inscription at Sar Mašhad the spiritual journey of his likeness (*hangirb*) to the world beyond in images taken from individual eschatology. Kerdīr implores the gods that heaven and hell will be shown to him. Then he continues:

[And (he) who in his life] is righteous (*ardā*), he will be met by his own [*dēn*] (who is) li[ke a virg]in. And (he) who is righteous, him his own *dēn* will lead to paradise. And who is unrighteous (*druwand*), him his own *dēn* will lead to hell.<sup>35</sup>

Kerdīr's wish finds fulfilment. Witnesses see his likeness going to the beyond. They say:

And now a woman appears, she is coming from the east. And we did not see a woman nobler than she is.<sup>36</sup>

The woman meets Kerdīr's likeness, greets him and proceeds with him hand in hand. Kerdīr's vision proves that the legend of the Virgin of Good Deeds must have been a well known story in the Zoroastrian tradition of the third century, based on a well-established older tradition. It is obvious that the Manichaean addition of a Virgin of Good Deeds to redeeming deities of the Third Evocation is an adaptation of the Zoroastrian Virgin of Good Deeds.

Again I cannot conclude without referring to an interesting modern parallel of the old Zoroastrian and Manichaean myth. It is presented in Hugo von Hofmannsthal's mystery play *Jedermann*. *Jedermann* owes much to the old English stage-play of 1490 *Everyman. A Morality Play*. It follows its allegoric way of mixing abstract ideas such as belief, Mammon and Death with human beings. One of those ideas is the deeds of the rich man who is going to die in

<sup>34</sup>Zaehner 1956, pp. 134–135; text West 1871, II, §§ pp. 110–144, pp. 9–11, pp. 133–135.

<sup>35</sup>Skjervø 1983, pp. 276–277; MacKenzie 1989, § 22; Gignoux 1991, § 22.

<sup>36</sup>Skjervø 1983, p. 281; MacKenzie 1989, § 26; Gignoux 1991, § 26.

sin. If strong and good-willing enough, the deeds might have protected and helped him in his last evil hour. But the rich man's deeds are no more than a feeble, weak old woman and belief must be called on for support. The assistance of belief strengthens the deeds so that they are able to accompany the rich man on his last way. The rich man now discovers a trace of past beauty in the appearance of the old woman. He says: "Hast ein Gesicht, verhärmt und bleich, und dünkt mich doch an Schönheit reich" (Your face is care worn and pale, and yet it seems to me to be rich in beauty). The difference between the Zoroastrian and the Christian myth is the introduction of faith and its redeeming force in the *Jedermann* play. It is alien to the rigour of the Zoroastrian (and the Manichaean) myth.

### Ferdousi's 'Šāhnāme'

My third example is a somewhat enigmatic passage from Ferdousi's *Šāhnāme*. It becomes understandable if analysed on the background of the older Zoroastrian tradition.

It is a well-known fact since Friedrich Spiegel and Theodor Nöldeke that the *Šāhnāme* contains many other mythological motives of Zoroastrian origin in secularised transformation or in a form adapted to the monotheistic world-view of Ferdousi's time. They belong to what Arthur Christensen called the "tradition religieuse" as opposed to the "tradition nationale" or "féodale" which also goes back to pre-Islamic times. The "tradition nationale" largely depends on the "tradition religieuse", although it may draw on sources from other origins, as in the case of the Alexander tale or the Rustam cycle.

One of the mythical figures who is already mentioned in the *Avesta* is the king Key Kā'ūs, the Kauui Usan/Usādan of the *Avesta* and perhaps also the kāvya Uśānas of the *R̥g-Veda* and the *Mahābhārata*. He is, in the "tradition nationale", as represented by the *Šāhnāme*, an arrogant, foolish and incompetent ruler of Iran. One of his foolish deeds is his abortive ascension to heaven on a throne drawn by four strong eagles. This attempt to trespass the natural limits of human life earns him divine punishment. The eagles on their way to the spheres are soon exhausted, they let the throne fall down to the ground, but in a miraculous way the king escapes. It is at this point that Ferdousi says: *nakardaš tabāh az šegefti jahān, hami budani dāšt andar nehān* "Miraculously the world did not destroy him, it kept hidden all that was due to become",<sup>37</sup> and then Ferdousi makes the surprising statement: *Siyāwoš az-u xāst āmad padid* which cannot mean anything else but "From him Siyāwoš was due to come into appearance". The second hemistich continues: *bebāyest laxti čamid o čarid* "it was necessary to go and graze a bit".<sup>38</sup> This caused Mohl to translate the whole second verse as follows «Le roi désirait qu'un canard sauvage se levât, car il avait besoin de manger un peu.» (The king wished that a wild duck would rise, for he needed to eat a bit).<sup>39</sup> Here Mohl obviously understood *siyāwoš* as "wild duck"<sup>40</sup> and gave a grammatically impossible translation. I regard both halves of the verse as opposing each other. On the one hand: The noble Siyāwoš would be the son of this mean king; on the other: Kā'ūs fallen into the jungle was compelled to subsist on herbs like an animal. In any case, the real meaning of the statement follows from

<sup>37</sup> *Šāhnāme* II, ed. Hāleqi-Motlaq, p. 97, line 394.

<sup>38</sup> *Šāhnāme* II, ed. Hāleqi-Motlaq, p. 97, line 395.

<sup>39</sup> Mohl II, 1842 = 1976, pp. 44–45, line 395.

<sup>40</sup> Steingass 1892 = 1963, p. 713 has "a kind of red duck".



an addition which Vullers gives in a footnote as transmitted only in the Ms. C. It is absent from all modern editions of the *Šāhnāme*<sup>41</sup> unless they take the Calcutta manuscript into consideration.<sup>42</sup> It reads as follows: *Agar šāh Kā'ūs gašti tabāh, jahāndār Xosrou nabudi ze-šāh* "If king Kā'ūs had been ruined, Xosrou the ruler of the world would not have been of the king".<sup>43</sup> That this addition is based on a good tradition is confirmed by the historian aṭ-Ṭa'ālibī who gives the same statement in his *Ġurar aḥbār mulūk al-furs*.<sup>44</sup> The meaning of the seemingly banal phrase is clear: if Kā'ūs had died before the birth of his future son Siyāwoš, the son of Siyāwoš, then the model king Xosrou would not have been born either.

This statement goes back to a passage of the lost *Avesta* book *Sūdgar nask*. It tells that the god Neryōsang wanted to kill Kā'ūs as punishment for his hybris. But the pre-existent protective spirit (*frawahr*) of the future king Xusrau forestalled it. He said: "Do not kill him, Neryōsang, increaser of the world, for if you kill this man, oh Neryōsang, increaser of the world, then the severing (*wisānēnīdār*) judge of Tūrān will not be found. For of this man [Kā'ūs] will be born he whose name is Siyāwaxš. Of Siyāwaxš I shall be born who am Xusrau".<sup>45</sup> That this example goes back to the *Avesta* is confirmed by an Avestan quotation in the Middle Persian commentary on *Vidēvdād* 2 which says: "Thereupon he [Nēryōsang] let him [Kā'ūs] escape, thereupon he [Kā'ūs] became mortal".<sup>46</sup>

This example confirms that the Middle Persian national tradition, even if transmitted by minstrels from generation to generation, did not fail to draw on works of their religious tradition and so ultimately on texts of the complete *Avesta*.

It is certainly a worthwhile task for the future to try to find and collect more traces of Zoroastrian motives in other religions in and around Iran. The fact that Zoroastrianism inspired and enriched other religions in many ways allows us to call the religion of Zoroaster a world religion.

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<sup>41</sup> *Šāhnāme*, ed. Moskov II, Moskva 1962, p. 154, after line 415; ed. Hāleqi-Motlaq II, Costa Mesa and New York 1990, p. 97, after line 395.

<sup>42</sup> I find it in *Šāhnāme-ye Ferdousi*, ed. Moḥammad Ramažāni, Tehrān 1312 = 1932/33, p. 326, line 8038.

<sup>43</sup> Vullers I, 1877, p. 412, n. 2.

<sup>44</sup> Ed. Zotenberg 1900, p. 167.

<sup>45</sup> *Dēnkard* 1911, ed. Madan, pp. 816.22–817.4. Cf. West 1892, pp. 222–223.

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